



DEC 12 2006

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, we enclose for your review the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) for the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program (RRP Program).

This document is both a FPEIS and the RRP Program description (40 CFR Part 1506.4<sup>1</sup>). The proposed action is to establish and implement the RRP Program. The FPEIS is developed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 USC 4321 et seq., and its implementing regulations, 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508.

Federal and Louisiana natural resource trustees have developed a statewide RRP Program to assist the natural resource trustees in carrying out their responsibilities for oil discharges or substantial threats of oil discharges. The RRP Program is described in this FPEIS and further defined in individual Regional Restoration Plans (RRPs) that will be prepared for each of the nine regions in the State of Louisiana. The goals of this statewide program are to: expedite and potentially reduce the cost of the natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) process; provide for consistency and predictability by detailing the NRDA process, thereby minimizing uncertainty to the public and industry; and, increase restoration of lost natural resources and services.

This document reflects the work of the RRP Program workgroup made up of federal and state trustees, which include the: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); U.S. Department of Interior; Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Office of the Governor; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The FPEIS also reflects the input and comments that were received during informal and formal scoping processes, and the public comment period associated with the draft PEIS.

One of the key features of the draft PEIS was the "Non-Project-Specific Cash Settlement" settlement alternative. This settlement alternative was based on the determination of a representative unit cost to restore predominant habitat types as part of a cash settlement. Based on input from the public and further consideration by the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program Workgroup, references to the concept of unit costs are reserved pending determination of feasibility of the development of unit costs for all regions. Therefore, references to the settlement alternative of "Non-Project-Specific Cash Settlement" in the draft PEIS are removed from this Final PEIS. Persons interested in participating in the determination of feasibility should contact either:

John Rapp  
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration  
LSU/Sea Grant Building, Room 124C  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: (225) 578-7924

<sup>1</sup> 40 CFR 1506.4 Combining documents. Any environmental document in compliance with NEPA may be combined with any other agency document to reduce duplication and paperwork.



or

Karolien Debusschere  
Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Office of the Governor  
150 Third Street, Suite 405  
Baton Rouge, LA 70801  
Phone: (225) 219-5800

If feasibility of the unit costs across all regions is determined at a later date, this Final PEIS may be amended to include this settlement alternative.

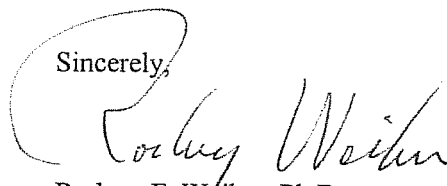
The document is also available at the following Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program website: <http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/>. Requests for additional copies of the document may also be obtained from Tony Penn at the NOAA's Assessment and Restoration Division (address and phone number below).

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received as a result of the issuance of the FPEIS. However, comments received will be reviewed and considered for their impact on the issuance of a record of decision (ROD). Please send comments (by mail, fax or email) to the responsible official identified below. The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action on or after February 23, 2007.

Responsible Official:

Tony Penn  
SE Branch Chief  
Assessment and Restoration Division  
National Ocean Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1305 East West Highway, Suite 10218  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Telephone: (301) 713-2990 ext. 197  
Facsimile: (301) 713-4387  
Tony.Penn@noaa.gov

Sincerely,



Rodney F. Weiher, Ph.D.  
NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure